DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 801 EA 012 317

TITLE	Coping with Stress. The Best of ERIC on Educational Management, Number 50.
INSTITUTION	Oregon Univ., Eugene. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Feb 80
CONTRACT	400-78-0007
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403 (free)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrative Personnel; *Administrator Role; *Coping; Employees; Management; Psychological Characteristics; *Stress Variables; Teachers; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

The twelve items in this annotated bibliography are entries in the ERIC system intended to help administrators in coping with stress. The publications cited deal with causes of stress, how to manage stress, how to make life style changes, how to recognize stressors, and work patterns associated with Type A behavior. The publications listed also cover stress management programs, stress prevention, prevention of teacher burnout and employee stress, and role pressure. (JM)

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ED182801

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Number 50, February 1980

THE BEST OF ERIC

ON EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management

Coping with Stress

1 **Adams, John D.** "Guidelines for Stress Management and Life Style Changes." *Personnel Administrator*, 24, 6 (June 1979), pp. 35-38, 44. EJ 203 088.

Three primary factors mediate an individual's experience of stress: the individual's personality, his or her interpersonal environment, and the nature of the organization in which he or she works. Although change in any of these areas is very difficult to accomplish, there are several sensible actions an individual can take in each area to manage stress effectively.

Adams, an organization development consultant, notes several organizational improvements that can reduce job stress, such as role clarification, stress education and assessment, and "identification and change of stress-provoking norms." The emphasis of this article, however, is on changes in the personal sphere. Adams presents several sensible and practical guidelines for "facilitating healthful life style changes," since many people have difficulty with such changes.

Adams emphasizes that changing one's stress-creating behaviors must be a gradual process. Wholesale life-style changes, like crash diets, are doomed to failure. The first prerequisite for change is an *explicit* personal decision or commitment to change. "Often, this mobilizing decision comes as a result of some 'shock,' either to one's self or to a relative or close friend," but such an experience is not necessary.

The next step is to decide on a simple, *manageable* change project. Try this single life-style change for a minimum of three weeks, and then decide whether it is worth continuing. Slowly, exchange old habits and activities for new, taking on easier changes early on to build up confidence and momentum.

When you do experience heavy and prolonged stress, try not to bottle up and simmer. Instead, reach out and take initiative—move "towards the environment in a positive and thoughtful way." Often, other people will not expect you to change and will resist such changes. So build and maintain interpersonal support systems that will facilitate and encourage positive change.

2 **Giammatteo, Michael C.**, and **Giammatteo, Delores M.**, *Executive Well-Being: Stress and Administrators*. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1980. 69 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

The authors of this monograph, former educators and school administrators who are now practicing psychologists, combine their expertise in all areas to help administrators deal successfully with stress.

Utilizing a model for dealing with stress that includes stress awareness, tolerance, reduction, and management, the authors offer a number of specific techniques for both dealing with stress and decreasing it. Unfortunately, the model is sometimes fuzzy, and definitions of parts of the model are inconsistent and poorly differentiated throughout the book. Yet the weaknesses of their theoretical framework are more than balanced by their insightful and practical suggestions. Perhaps their unique contribution lies in their concept of stress awareness.

Emphasizing that unknown or unrecognized stressors have much more power over people than do identified stressors, the Giammatteos provide a number of helpful exercises to heighten stress awareness. These exercises help administrators identify specific "sources of overload" connected with major changes, impulsive behavior, lack of role clarity, overwork, and unchallenging work. They help administrators recognize their own "type A" behavior and provide an exercise for tallying a personal "stress score." Using these exercises, administrators can pinpoint exact causes of stress and begin to deal with rather than repress them.

The Giammatteos also take an unusual tack in focusing on interpersonal conflicts as a source of stress. They recommend techniques to increase tolerance of others' ideas and point out that the unwillingness or inability to express one's feelings often leads to increased stress.

Through these and other suggestions and perceptions, the authors successfully apply the most current insights of counselors and therapists to the everyday problems of today's school administrators.

3 **Howard, John H.**; **Cunningham, D. A.**; and **Rechnitzer, P. A.** "Work Patterns Associated with Type A Behavior: A Managerial Population." *Human Relations*, 30, 9 (September 1977), pp. 825-36. EJ 169 823.

"Type A behavior," say the authors, is characterized by "chronic and excessive struggle, competitiveness, ambition, and impatience," as well as by "a high need for achievement" and "a strong sense of time urgency." Type A behavior has been positively correlated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease.

In this study, the authors examined 256 managers from twelve companies to determine the relationships between Type A behavior and certain work patterns and job characteristics. Overall, 61 percent of the managers were found to be Type A, and about half of

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these managers were considered to be "extreme" Type A's. Companies that were growing at a high rate tended to have a greater percentage of Type A managers — up to 76 percent. Extreme Type B's, the authors speculate, may represent the traditional deadwood of a company.

Extreme Type A's tended to work more discretionary hours every week and travel more days per year than the other types. Type A's as a group also had a higher median salary than Type B's. In an analysis of job tension factors, the authors found that Type A's scored low on "contentment." In contrast to the more satisfied Type B's, Type A's had heavier workloads, held positions of supervisory responsibility, made decisions on others' careers, and worked in competition with others.

Type A's, on the other hand, felt the least "locked-in" by their jobs, a finding reflecting their greater personal confidence. A Type A manager, state the authors, "feels that his education and training are adequate for the present and future and that there are alternative organizations in which he can develop his career."

4

Hunsaker, Phillip L.; Mudgett, William C.; and **Wynne, Bayard E.** "Assessing and Developing Administrators for Turbulent Environments." *Administration and Society*, 7, 3 (November 1975), pp. 312-27. EJ 130 918.

According to the studies of several psychologists and organizational scientists, the successful administrator of the near future must be flexible to changing circumstances, tolerant of ambiguity, and have an attitude "directed toward inquiry and novelty." To help in detecting and developing such qualities, the authors have developed a model system for "selecting and preparing administrators for the organic-adaptive organizations and turbulent-field environments, which are already becoming reality for many organizations."

One part of the authors' model is to use various psychological screening methods to determine who can and cannot cope with a turbulent work environment. An individual's score on the "Purdue-Rutgers Prior Experience Inventory, II," for example, indicates the optimal level of incongruity expected by the individual from his or her environment. Higher scores indicate a greater capacity for turbulent environments.

Another approach is to use behavioral simulation, which, the authors explain, is somewhere between the simple decision tests used in administrative assessment centers and an on-the-job test of a potential administrator. The "Leadership Assessment and Training Simulation" models "much of the complexity and realism of real life decision situations, and participants report high degrees of motivation and involvement."

The authors also describe techniques for classifying job environments according to how complex and turbulent they are. In their overall scheme, potential administrators would first undergo the various screening and testing procedures and then be placed in a job environment that matched their own tolerances and abilities.

5

Kiev, Ari, and **Kohn, Vera.** *Executive Stress: An AMA Survey Report.* New York: AMACOM, American Management Associations, 1979. 64 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

In this well-written publication Kiev and Kohn report the results of a massive survey of members of the American Management Associations. More than 2,500 respondents offered their perceptions of what causes stress, how to cope with it, and how much stress they experience.

Although Kiev and Kohn place great importance on the fact that the managers did not report experiencing much stress ("The results do not support the popular image of the harried executive"), the wording of their survey questions all but negates findings on this

portion of the survey. Respondents were to indicate such things as whether they "work excessively," "lose sight of what's really important," and "set impossible deadlines" — self-characteristics that people are almost never aware of or able to admit, even to themselves.

The findings that *are* valuable here, however, are the managers' perceptions of what causes stress for them and their techniques for dealing with it. The leading causes of stress cited were a heavy workload, time pressures, and unrealistic deadlines. The most common method of coping with stress was delegating work instead of carrying the workload alone. The authors report that one manager noted that delegating responsibility "helps prevent stress from building up and at the same time gives the subordinate a good feeling of accomplishment." This method of coping suggests many administrators are aware of the situations that cause stress and attempt to reduce the stress in a realistic and appropriate way.

The second most popular method of coping with stress was to analyze the stress-producing situation and decide what was and what was not worth worrying about. The authors call this "a tool for selecting an appropriate response to prevent stress from turning into distress."

6

Manuso, James S. "Executive Stress Management." *Personnel Administrator*, 24, 11 (November 1979), pp. 23-26. EJ number not yet assigned.

Stress, says Manuso, is "a pattern of biochemical, functional and structural change that is involved in coping with any increased demand upon vital activity, especially adaptation to new situations." Occupational stress can be caused by any one of a number of imbalances: too much or too little work, an overly ambiguous or overly rigid work environment, extreme amounts of responsibility, or either too much or too little change. Stress, in turn, can cause a variety of well-known physical and mental disorders, including headache, allergies, ulcers, hypertension, and heart disease.

The key to reducing the effects of stress, says Manuso, is "learning how to regulate the system internally." One regulatory technique is called the "quieting response": when a stressful situation comes up, "one takes two deliberate deep breaths, paying attention to relaxing the jaw, the shoulders and tongue," while telling oneself not to get involved in the stress. This is usually enough to break the "stress response." For stress control on a long-term basis, Manuso recommends learning some system of deep relaxation, such as meditation or biofeedback training.

At the Equitable Life Assurance Society, where Manuso works as a clinical psychologist in the employee health department, a stress management program helps employees showing stress-related symptoms to relax. Following a medical exam, stressed employees receive two weeks of biofeedback training followed by five weeks of deep relaxation training and behavior modification. The company has benefited considerably by this policy, says Manuso,

not only in decreased health program costs but in increased productivity as well.

7 **McGaffey, Thomas N.** "New Horizons in Organizational Stress Prevention Approaches." *Personnel Administration,* 23, 11 (November 1978), pp. 26-32. EJ 192 434.

"Stress disorders cost organizations an estimated $17 to $25 billion each year in lost performance, absenteeism and health benefit payments," states McGaffey. Much of this expense could be saved, though, if organizations had comprehensive stress prevention programs.

A good stress prevention system should have two components: a generalized stress prevention program and a crisis intervention program. The generalized program might include exercise, biofeedback, and meditation programs, as well as education about stress. Such programs are growing rapidly in popularity, says McGaffey. For example, "over 120 companies provide their employees an opportunity to learn transcendental meditation and some are even providing special rooms for meditation."

But there will always be a certain high-risk group of employees for which such generalized programs will not work. For this subgroup, McGaffey encourages the use of an early-crisis intervention program called the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Under an EAP, employees showing significant signs of stress (enough to affect performance) are referred by their supervisors to the "In-House Coordinator" of the EAP. The coordinator explains the EAP, "motivates the employee to use the program and establishes the initial contact with the Diagnostic and Referral Agent." This agent is preferably "a specialized and integrated system of professionals outside the organization" who monitor and integrate the employee's treatment with physicians, lawyers, psychologists, and family and vocational counselors. Several companies that have established EAPs report large decreases in absenteeism and medical costs for employees treated in the program.

8 **Quick, James C.,** and **Quick, Jonathan D.** "Reducing Stress Through Preventive Management." *Human Resource Management,* 18, 3 (Fall 1979), pp. 15-22. EJ number not yet assigned.

Administrators should not try to eliminate job stress in their organizations, state the authors; rather they should attempt to *manage* stress. The goal should be to maximize "eustress (euphoria and stress), a growthful, adaptive, healthy state of pleasurable arousal," while minimizing destructive stress, or "distress." Both kinds of stress are the result of the stimulation of the body's "fight-or-flight" reaction; the difference is in how the individual manages "the increased energy made available through this response."

Employee stress can be managed with two levels of preventive management actions. Level I techniques are organizational in nature and involve analyzing and restructuring job roles to reduce distress and provide greater job satisfaction. For example, in the "role analysis" technique—which is designed for stress situations caused by ambiguously defined work roles—"role profiles" are generated and coordinated by those persons in the organization who have expectations regarding the ill-defined position.

Level II preventive management actions are aimed at the individual level. These techniques "attempt to inhibit the 'fight-or-flight' response before it occurs or to provide a means for the individual to dissipate the distressful consequences of the response."

Some Level II techniques are directed at relieving specific symptoms, such as tense muscles or a rapidly beating heart. Included here are biofeedback and "autogenics"—a derivative of self-hypnosis. Other techniques, such as "systematic desensitization" and "dynamic psychotherapy," are directed at specific stressors (for example, fear of public speaking). A trained clinician is recommended for these techniques. Finally, there are general techniques that have proved themselves as stress preventors, including aerobic exercise, meditation, and systematic relaxation.

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12. NASSP Bulletin, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091. $4.00.

9 **Reed, Sally.** "What You Can Do to Prevent Teacher Burnout." *National Elementary Principal,* 58, 3 (March 1979), pp. 67-70. EJ 199 444.

Principals have long been aware of the symptoms of teacher burnout, particularly in veteran teachers with seven to ten years of experience. But now, says Reed, the senior editor of *Instructor* magazine, the burnout syndrome is becoming an epidemic. Surveys are finding that teachers are becoming increasingly bored, disillusioned, and dissatisfied with their jobs. And the NEA reports that teachers are leaving the profession much earlier in their careers, particularly the best and brightest teachers.

So what can principals do to prevent burnout and keep teachers going? Reed offers a wealth of suggestions, along with many specific examples to illustrate her recommendations. Since boredom is one widely reported symptom of burnout, Reed suggests new challenges and fresh environments to spice up teachers' lives. Teachers can be allowed to switch classrooms and grades and expand into new curriculum areas. Principals can help teachers get sabbaticals, exchange opportunities, grants, and fellowships, and can encourage teachers to use their professional days.

To keep good teachers in the profession, principals can allow and encourage them to job-share their positions with someone else. And to combat feelings of alienation and powerlessness, principals can involve teachers in the decision-making process, particularly in matters that affect the teachers directly.

According to one researcher who studied "the life passages of teaching," most schools "do not reinforce or promote the mentor system that many other professions use." Reed suggests that to increase teacher self-esteem, principals place veteran instructors in charge of new employees "to inspire, to teach, [and] to guide."

10 **Schuler, Randall S.** "Effective Use of Communication to Minimize Employee Stress." *Personnel Administrator,* 24, 6 (June 1979), pp. 40-44. EJ 203 089.

Employee stress can arise from feelings of inability to do an assigned job, lack of feedback from management, not knowing what to do or how to do it, or from personal value conflicts. Effective and proper use of communication by supervisors can do much to reduce these sources of employee stress. Schuler here discusses seven categories of communication behaviors that can

either induce or reduce stress, and outlines several general skills of good communication.

Encouragement, or "achievement communication behavior" as Schuler calls it, is a valuable technique for increasing the employee's feelings of self-worth and confidence. This is especially important for newer employees and employees facing difficult assignments; with simple encouragement, employee stress is reduced while motivation is enhanced. Both encouragement and its opposite, "ego deflation communication behavior," tend to be self-fulfilling: what the supervisor expects is what the employee usually delivers.

In some situations, "participative communication behavior" is called for, in which supervisor and employee discuss and iron out conflicts and inconsistencies on a one-to-one basis. In other circumstances, a directive approach—in which the supervisor tells the employee exactly what is to be done and how to do it—may be the least stressful. Directive communication is appropriate when "the employee doesn't want or have the information to determine what to do or how to do something." The effective supervisor, concludes Schuler, knows how to use the various communication behaviors at the appropriate times to get the job done while keeping employee stress to a minimum.

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11 **Swent, Boyd,** and **Gmelch, Walter H.** *Stress at the Desk and How to Creatively Cope. OSSC Bulletin Volume 21, Number 4.* Eugene, Oregon: Oregon School Study Council 1977. 51 pages. ED 146 698

What techniques are used by Oregon school administrators to cope with stress? In this monograph, Swent and Gmelch report the results of a 1977 survey that determined not only the methods and strategies of stress management used by these educators, but also the demands that caused the most stress in their lives.

The most common coping strategies were physiological in nature. In addition to physical work and exercise, administrators mentioned such relaxation activities as yoga, meditation, and hobbies. Other frequently used strategies involved separating oneself from the work environment. Some individuals isolated themselves in their homes, while others traveled to the mountains or seashore to escape. Many educators fostered friendships outside the immediate educational environment so they could "discuss with non-educators topics other than education."

Cognitive activities used as coping techniques commonly involved "positive attitudes and supportive philosophies of life." Responses included "establishing realistic goals," "learning to know one's self, maintaining a sense of humor," and "believing in and practicing the Christian ethic."

Surprisingly, the least mentioned coping strategies were those dealing with the acquisition of interpersonal and management skills. The authors speculate that administrators may not recognize such techniques as successful stress reducers, or else they may not yet have mastered these techniques.

Most of the top stressors perceived by the Oregon administrators were "constraints intrinsic to administration," such as complying with rules, attending meetings, and dealing with interrupting phone calls. Other stressors were interpersonal and intrapersonal in nature, such as having to make decisions that would affect colleagues, resolving conflicts, and imposing excessively high demands on oneself.

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12 **Vetter, Eric W.** "Role Pressure and the School Principal." *NASSP Bulletin,* 60, 403 (November 1976), pp. 11-23. EJ 156 493.

A principal's behavior is shaped by two forces: the "role demands" put on the principal by persons either internal or external to the school, and the principal's own ideas of how he or she should behave. "Role pressure" develops, says Vetter, whenever there is conflict between the demands of two or more of these role senders, when there are too many demands to be handled, or when there is an inability to perform against role demands (role inadequacy).

The sensible "managerial approach" that Vetter outlines for handling management stress involves "a 'proactive' posture to take command of the role relationship in order to achieve better job results and to reduce role stress." One option is to openly and maturely discuss with role senders (teachers, parents, students, fellow administrators, and so forth) their expectations and demands, and to explain to them your own views concerning what should be expected of you.

Another option is to "co-opt" role senders into sharing responsibility for the behavior they are demanding. The number of role demands can be cut down by arranging the physical office space to limit the principal's accessibility, or by requiring certain requests to be in writing. Consolidating role senders, as with the PTA, also reduces the volume of requests, but in turn greatly increases the intensity of the demands that are made.

In addition to limiting and refining external role demands, the principal should learn to manage his or her total life. "An inventory of outside involvements" is one technique for determining pressure sources. Another very useful option is to use "metraprescriptions": self-devised rules for governing one's own behavior. Priority setting is yet another technique Vetter discusses for dealing with stress *proactively* rather than *reactively.*

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Besides processing documents and journal articles, the Clearinghouse prepares bibliographies, literature reviews, monographs, and other interpretive research studies on topics in its educational area.

This publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the Association of California School Administrators for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions, however, do not necessarily represent the official view or opinion of either the Association of California School Administrators or the National Institute of Education.

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